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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000735

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/16/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [LO](#)

SUBJECT: "NO ROMA WALL HERE" PRESOV AUTHORITIES TELL
AMBASSADOR

REF: BRATISLAVA 661

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe M. Vallee for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (SBU) During a September 13 visit to Presov in eastern Slovakia, Ambassador raised the issue of the so-called "Roma Wall" (reftel) with the two Deputy Mayors (Presov Mayor Milan Benc was out of the country). Both officials assured the Ambassador that no wall would be built separating Roma from non-Roma citizens. They did not, however, rule out the possibility that several security cameras would be installed in the Stara Tehelna neighborhood, ostensibly to make residents of a nearby retirement home feel more secure. As one of the Deputy Mayors explained, the non-Roma citizens had filed a lengthy petition expressing their concern for the safety of their property, and the city felt compelled to take some kind of action.

2. (SBU) During the course of the courtesy call the Deputy Mayors reiterated to the Ambassador that Presov is seeking EU structural development funds for the construction of an industrial park in their city. The Ambassador took the opportunity to emphasize that the international community and potential investors would not react well to the construction of a Roma wall. He also added that our own country has struggled in the past with tensions between communities and that education, tolerance, and dialogue were preferred avenues of reconciling communities.

ROMA PLENIPOTENTIARY CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC

3. (C) The following day, the DCM hosted a luncheon for prominent Roma issue opinion leaders from both within and outside of the GOS. Klara Orgovanova, the GOS Roma Plenipotentiary, seemed pleased by the news of the Ambassador's meeting with the Presov officials, but remained wary (and perhaps for good reason; a September 14 Pravda newspaper story claimed that the city council in Presov passed plans to erect a chain link fence in place of a "wall"). Orgovanova said she would be traveling to Presov herself to tell the Mayor that Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights Pal Csaky would himself be intervening in the situation.

4. (C) Other lunch participants suggested that Slovakia needed to more accurately portray the Roma in the media, noting that while coverage of the Roma has improved over time, there was still very little Roma representation within the media itself (aside from the USG funded Roma Press Center). We also emphasized that discrimination against Roma children in schools should not be tolerated at the national level, regardless of views at the local level.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE: WHAT ROMA MINORITY?

5. (C) COMMENT: While NGO and government education consultants agreed that job training and education were immediate needs, Robert Dohanyos, the Director General of the Section for Minority Cultures at the Ministry of Culture, suggested that Roma should be sent to special work programs where they would be taught traditional Roma vocations. His suggestion resulted in the rolling of many eyes, and reinforced the belief of some lunch participants that the Section for Minority Cultures exists first and foremost to protect Slovakia's largest minority: the Hungarians. END COMMENT.
VALLEE

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